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ABSTRACT

This booklet, written as a group project for a class in technical writing, provides a guide for students in exploring, practicing, and actually conducting the job search process. It includes a step-by-step process that should increase students' chances of securing a job that matches their interests and skills after high school or college. The four chapters of the booklet cover the following topics: getting started in a job search; introducing oneself to potential employers via the telephone, cover letters, resumes, and job applications; interviewing skills; and going to work. The booklet contains 12 resources for further information. (KC)

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Seeking employment in the '90's

JOB Search GUIDE

ED 408 452

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TriCounty TECHNICAL COLLEGE

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SEEKING EMPLOYMENT IN THE 90's

JOB SEARCH GUIDE

April 1996

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INTRODUCTION

This booklet is the result of a group project for a class in technical writing offered by the Partnership for Academic and Career Education in cooperation with Tri-County Technical College and Clemson University. It was prepared by a team of middle and high school teachers and college faculty and staff as a guide for students in exploring, practicing, and actually conducting the job search process. It is intended as an easy-to-use, practical source of information. Students who follow the step-by-step process through its various stages should increase their chances of successfully securing a job that matches their interests and skills after high school or college.

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CHAPTER 1

GETTING STARTED

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CHAPTER 1

GETTING STARTED

INTRODUCTION

In this section, we'll discuss three things that you'll need to do throughout your job search.

- Maintain a positive attitude.
- Manage your time.
- Identify sources of job leads.

MAINTAIN A POSITIVE ATTITUDE

Job seeking requires you to "sell yourself" to potential employers. What you have to offer are your skills and abilities. As any effective salesperson will tell you, it's important to have an upbeat and positive attitude if you plan to effectively market yourself in the workplace.

When it comes to meeting key people who can help you with your job search and/or hire you, a positive attitude will open doors. Plus, a positive attitude will help you build confidence. Soon, you'll discover that job seeking really can be a fun challenge.

Someone once said, "The shortest distance between two people is a smile." Go ahead, put on a smile--and get ready to find the job you've always wanted!

MANAGE YOUR TIME

Now is the best time to begin the job-seeking process. You have many skills that are needed in today's workplace, but you'll have to take the initiative. You've already made a good start by reading this booklet.

One of the most important things to know about your job search is that finding work is a full-time job! For example, consider the chart below.

To find a job, you must:	In a full-time job, you:
Set your own responsibilities (things to do each day).	Have responsibilities (duties and procedures).
Wake up early at a set time to start looking for work.	"Punch a clock" or be at work "on time."
Look hard for a job, 40 hours a week (if possible).	Work hard all day, 40 hours a week.
Be your own boss (or get a friend to help you stay on track).	Report to a boss, who supervises your work.

An anonymous writer once wrote, "To be successful, you have to keep moving. No one ever stumbles onto anything while sitting." If you're willing to spend up to 40 hours a week in your job search, you'll eventually stumble onto something--the job you want and need!

TIPS FOR PLANNING AN EFFECTIVE JOB SEARCH

Here are some tips that will help you be an effective job seeker.

- Make a "To Do List" every day. Outline daily activities to help you look for a job.
- Call employers to find out the best times to apply. Some companies take applications only on certain days and at certain times during the week.
- Apply for jobs early in the day. This will make a good impression and give you time to complete applications, have interviews, take tests, etc.

- Keep a record of the employers you contact, dates, names of key people, and special notes.
- Apply at several companies in the same area when possible. This saves time and money.
- Be prepared. Have a "master application" and resumes, pens, maps and job information with you all the time. You never know when a "hot lead" will come your way.
- Follow up job leads immediately. If you find out about a job late in the day, call right then! Don't wait until the next day.
- Network. Tell everyone you know that you are looking for a job. Stay in touch with friends and contacts. Follow up new leads immediately.
- Read pamphlets and books on how to get a job. (See the list of resources we've provided at the back of this booklet.) The time you spend reading these materials will save you a great deal of time in your job search. Also, the more you know about job seeking, the more competitive you'll be!

IDENTIFY SOURCES OF JOB LEADS

Many job seekers mistakenly think that good job opportunities just come along. But usually, a good job will not come to you--you must go to it. The more assertive you are about your job search, the more opportunities you'll find.

Here are some tips that will help you find job leads.

- Check the job listings at the Counseling Center.
- Try to locate job listings on bulletin boards (maybe in post offices, libraries, hospitals, etc.).
- Ask your instructors, relatives, friends, and neighbors for openings, leads, and contacts.
- Find out if the company you're interested in has a job hotline.
- Read the employment ads in newspapers and trade journals. But don't rely completely on these ads—only about 20% of available jobs are advertised.
- Go to the S.C. Employment Security Commission (Job Service) in your county.
- Check in the yellow pages of the phone book for names of companies that offer work in your field.
- Contact private employment agencies. But be sure to ask about their fees before using their services.

- Join a professional organization in your field. The professional organization can provide you with employment contacts. Plus, student membership fees are usually minimal.

WHEN I FIND A JOB LEAD, WHAT DO I DO NEXT?

Finding a job lead is just the beginning. After that, you'll need a way to introduce yourself to the employer. In the following chapters, we'll discuss ways for you to turn a job lead into a job offer!

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCING YOURSELF

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CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCING YOURSELF

INTRODUCTION

In this section, we'll discuss the following different ways for you to introduce yourself to an employer.

- Using the telephone
- Writing a cover letter
- Writing and designing a resume
- Completing a job application form

USING THE TELEPHONE

At some point in your job search, you will speak with potential employers by phone. Either you will call the employer, or the employer will call you to set up an interview. Because telephone contact usually occurs before you meet someone face-to-face, it's very important that you make a good impression over the phone.

If you find a job lead and want to learn more about the opportunity, using the phone can save you some time. For example, let's say that Joe found out about a job opening at XYZ Corporation. All he knew was that the company supposedly needed an electronics

technician. By making a phone call, he learned the following information:

- job title for the position
- name and title of person doing the hiring
- required qualifications for the position
- initial steps in applying--cover letter, resume, application

When Joe called the XYZ Corporation, he learned that the company was in the process of hiring an electronics technician. However, the company did not accept applications through their Human Resources Department. Instead of applying at the company site, Joe was told to go through the local Job Service to fill out an application.

Joe also found out that at the Job Service he could read a detailed description of the job and required qualifications. Plus, he was informed that the company would be making a hiring decision within a couple of weeks.

As you can see, Joe used the phone effectively to find out more about the job lead. He also saved himself a great deal of time and learned about the steps he needed to take to apply for the position.

USING A PHONE SCRIPT TO BE MORE EFFECTIVE

To be effective in using the phone, you'll probably need to practice. You may want to write down your thoughts and questions before you make the call. Using a phone script will help you make a good impression over the phone. Adapt the sample below to your own needs.

> Hello, may I speak to Mr. Smith, please?
>
> Hello, Mr. Smith, my name is Joe Jobseeker.
>
> I'm a student in industrial electronics at Tri-County Technical College, and I'm interested in employment opportunities with your company. I'd like to know if you currently have any job openings for an electronics technician. If so, I'd like to learn more about the application process.
>
> Thank you for your time, Mr. Smith.

WRITING A COVER LETTER

When you send your resume to a prospective employer, always send a cover letter to accompany the resume. Cover letters are designed to do the following:

- Identify the position for which you're applying.
- Tell how your skills and talents will benefit the company.
- Show why the employer should read your resume.
- Ask for a job interview.

COMPONENTS OF A COVER LETTER

Like most other forms of writing, a cover letter contains three distinct sections: introduction, body, and conclusion. Listed below are some elements that need to be included with each section of the cover letter.

Introduction
- Reference the specific position for which you're applying.
- Tell how or where you learned of the position.
- Give your most important and relevant qualification(s).

Body
- Explain why and how you're qualified for the position.
- Emphasize your education and work experience.
- Relate your education and experience to the position.

Conclusion
- Remind the employer of your major qualifications.
- Indicate when you plan to contact the employer for follow-up.
- Request an interview (in a professional manner).

TIPS FOR WRITING COVER LETTERS

- Write a separate cover letter each time you apply for a job.
- Address the letter to a specific person (name and title).
- Type letters on standard size quality paper.
- Use proper sentence structure and correct spelling.
- Convey personal warmth and enthusiasm.
- Keep the letter short and to the point.
- Request an interview and tell when you plan to follow-up.
- Sign your name in black or blue ink.

SAMPLE COVER LETTER

123 Park Lane
Pendleton, SC 29670
(864) 123-4567

March 8, 1996

Mr. John Spangler
XYZ Corporation
Human Resources Manager
1234 Candyland Ave.
Westminster, SC 29693

Dear Mr. Spangler:

I read your ad for outside service technician in the Pendleton Journal and believe I have the ambition, determination, and qualifications to perform well in that position. I'm submitting the enclosed resume for your consideration.

I have eight months of practical, hands-on experience as an automated equipment technician. I also have formal training in electronics and will graduate from the Industrial Electronics Technology curriculum at Tri-County Technical College in May 1996. I am a strong believer in the value of education as well as hands-on training. I believe that you are a top producer of quality flow metering devices, and I'd be proud to be a part of your company. I think I would be an asset to your company and represent it well.

The enclosed resume will give further details regarding my education and other qualifications. I plan to contact you by phone within the next week to answer any questions and to arrange an interview. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jobseeker Extraordinaire

enclosure

16

SAMPLE COVER LETTER AND FORMATTING TIPS

space down as needed to center

913 Hillside Dr.
Anderson, SC 29625
(864) 234-567

2 spaces

March 8, 1996

2 spaces

Ms. Elaine Smith
Personnel Manager — *include title if possible*
Accounting Firm U.S.A.
1234 Greenback Rd.
Somewhere, SC 29622

2 spaces

Dear Ms. Smith:

2 spaces

I learned from Jane Doe that your company is planning to hire an accounting assistant, and I'm submitting the enclosed resume for your consideration.

2 spaces

In May, I will graduate from Tri-County Technical College with an Associate's Degree in Accounting. While pursuing my degree, I've also worked part-time as an accounts receivable clerk with Winn Dixie, Inc. I believe my success in Tri-County's well-respected accounting program and the valuable work experience I've gained at Winn Dixie will help me contribute to your firm.

2 spaces

The enclosed resume will give further details regarding my education and other qualifications. I plan to contact you by phone within the next week to answer any questions and to arrange an interview. Thank you for your consideration.

2 spaces

Sincerely,

4 spaces

Anna Wannajob

2 spaces

enclosure — *the term enclosure here refers to your resume*

WRITING AND DESIGNING A RESUME

A well-written and nicely designed resume is one of the most commonly accepted ways to introduce yourself to an employer. The resume is designed to do the following:

- State your career objective.
- Introduce your qualifications and experience.
- Show an employer what makes you the best candidate.
- Gain enough interest to get an interview.

TYPES OF RESUME INFORMATION

There is more than one way to prepare an effective resume. The format can vary from individual to individual and from career to career. However, all effective resumes have some common elements.

You need two types of information to prepare your resume.

Personal information

- job skills and talents you possess
- work experience
- education
- career goals
- honors and/or awards you've received
- activities with which you've been involved
- names and addresses of references

Job information

- description of the job for which you're applying
- education and experience required
- hours and shifts usually worked
- pay range

KINDS OF RESUMES

There are two widely used formats for organizing resumes.

Chronological

- List most recent job first, second most recent next, etc.
- Give employment dates and job duties for each job.
- List educational experience beginning with most recent.

Functional

- Describe skills, abilities, and accomplishments that relate to the job for which you're applying.
- De-emphasize employment history by omitting detailed job descriptions of each job.

Of the two formats, the chronological is most preferred by employers. What kind of resume should you use? Answer the following questions:

- Have you progressed up a clearly defined career ladder?
- Are you looking for advancement in a particular field?
- Do you have recent experience at one or more companies?

If your answer to any of the above questions is *yes*, use a chronological resume.

- Do you want to emphasize your work skills and accomplishments instead of describing your job duties?
- Do you have little or no job experience?
- Do you have gaps in your work history?
- Are you applying for a job in a new field?

If your answer to any of these questions is *yes*, use a functional resume.

COMPONENTS OF A RESUME

While no two resumes are necessarily alike, most resumes contain the common elements described below.

Personal

- List your name, address, and telephone number.

Career Objective

- State specifically the kind of job you're seeking.
- Be concise (one sentence and/or two lines at most).
- Ask yourself, "What kind of job do I want? What am I qualified for? What skills do I possess?"
- Tailor your career objective to the position for which you're applying.

Education

- List most recent educational achievements first.
- Include degree earned (or program currently enrolled in).
- Date degree was earned (or expected graduation date).
- Include school name and location (city and state).
- Include major area of study (and minor if applicable).
- List GPA only if 3.0 or above.
- List relevant courses (e.g., accounting)--this is optional.
- Do not include high school information unless you feel strongly that it strengthens your candidacy (e.g., you gained three years of experience at a vocational center, etc.).

Work experience

- List jobs that are relevant to the position you're seeking.
- Begin with most recent (if using chronological format).
- Include position title, dates held (month and year).
- Include name of company and location (city and state).
- List your major responsibilities (if using chronological format).
- Describe your job duties by using action verbs such as *communicated, computed, developed, improved, managed, served,* etc. (See page 13 for more.)

Honors/awards

- List honors or awards that strengthen your candidacy.

References

- List names, titles, addresses, and telephone numbers of at least three individuals who will give you a favorable report.
- Ask permission before listing someone as reference.
- Ask the individual if he/she will provide a favorable report.

As you think about what you plan to include in your resume, keep in mind that most employers prefer a one-page resume. However, some people find that they can't give a well-rounded introduction to their skills, experience, and other qualifications in a one page resume. If that's the case, then two pages are acceptable with the following guidelines:

- Try not to have a page break in the middle of a section.
- Include reference information on the second page.

WHAT NOT TO INCLUDE IN YOUR RESUME

As you gather information for your resume, certain information needs to be omitted selectively. For example, information regarding your height, weight, marital status, physical health, age, religion, etc., should not be included. This information may be required on certain application forms, but there is no reason to include it on your resume. Most companies follow strict non-discrimination guidelines and may toss out resumes containing too much personal information!

TEN TIPS FOR THE EFFECTIVE RESUME

- Type your resume, or print it on a high quality printer, using standard size high quality paper.
- Do not include irrelevant personal information (age, weight, height, marital status, etc.).
- Do not include salary and wages.
- Organize the information under helpful headings.
- Be positive; identify accomplishments.
- Use action verbs (see list below).
- Be specific; use concise sentences; keep it to one page if possible.
- Make sure your resume is neat and readable.
- Proofread carefully; have someone else proofread it also.
- Inspect photocopies for clarity, smudges and marks.

MORE ACTION VERBS

Clerical	**Communication**	**Creative**	**Financial**
arranged	arranged	created	analyzed
catalogued	addressed	designed	balanced
compiled	authored	fashioned	budgeted
generated	drafted	illustrated	marketed
organized	formulated	invented	planned
processed	persuaded	performed	projected
Helping	**Management**	**Research**	**Technical**
assessed	administered	clarified	assembled
coached	analyzed	evaluated	calculated
counseled	developed	identified	designed
diagnosed	directed	inspected	operated
facilitated	evaluated	organized	overhauled
represented	supervised	summarized	repaired

SAMPLE CHRONOLOGICAL RESUME

Lynn Hanks Smith

1409 Teasley Avenue Anderson, SC 29621 (864) 231-0422

CAREER OBJECTIVE

Administrative support position utilizing my communication, organization, and computer skills

EDUCATION

TRI-COUNTY TECHNICAL COLLEGE, Pendleton, SC
Associate Degree in Business
Expected graduation date: December 1996

COMPUTER SKILLS

Proficient with the following applications:

- WordPerfect 5.1 DOS
- WordPerfect 5.2 for Windows
- DeskTop Publishing
- Lotus 1-2-3

EXPERIENCE

MR. / MRS. TEMPS, Anderson, SC
Temporary Office Employee, May 1995 to present

- Worked as Shipping / Data Entry Clerk at BASF Corporation
- Operated Switchboard at Century Ford Lincoln Mercury
- Performed administrative assistant duties at Tri-County Tech. College

TRI-COUNTY TECHNICAL COLLEGE, Pendleton, SC
Student Work-Study Employee, October 1994 to May 1995

- Performed data entry
- Posted grades in both grade book and computer
- Relieved secretaries in the Arts and Sciences Division
- Collected and distributed department mail

PREMIERE CABLE, Belton, SC
Customer Service Representative, March 1991 to May 1993

- Answered phone
- Waited on walk-in customers
- Used computer to schedule installations and disconnections for service technicians
- Maintained a cash drawer

CHARLES FURNITURE COMPANY, Anderson, SC
Bookkeeper / Sales Associate, November 1990 to March 1991

- Handled accounts receivable and payable
- Answered phone
- Waited on customers
- Processed payroll

SAMPLE CHRONOLOGICAL RESUME (CONTINUED)

BUCK'S ENGINE PARTS WAREHOUSE, Anderson, SC
Bookkeeper, June 1988 to April 1990
- Handled accounts receivable and payable
- Processed payroll
- Balanced daily cash journals
- Generated month-end reports through the computer and balanced the reports

FINANCE SOUTH, Anderson, SC
Customer Service Representative, August 1985 to May 1988
- Operated cash drawer
- Answered phone
- Waited on customers
- Processed and balanced all daily reports
- Filled out and processed loan applications
- Filled out and filed Form 400's for the Highway Department

AMERICAN FEDERAL BANK, Anderson, SC
Teller, June 1984 to August 1985
- Handled banking transactions for customers
- Operated and balanced cash drawer daily
- Helped balance vault
- Rotated on call ATM duty

ELECTRIC CITY PRINTING COMPANY, Anderson, SC
Accountant (Temporary Employment), March 1984 to June 1984
- Assisted head accounting clerk
- Posted accounts receivable
- Helped with payroll
- Relieved switchboard operator during lunch

REFERENCES

Dr. Marianne Taylor
English Department Head
Tri-County Technical College
P.O. Box 587
Pendleton, SC 29670
(864) 225-2250 Ext. 2331

Mrs. Robin McFall
English Instructor
Tri-County Technical College
P.O. Box 587
Pendleton, SC 29670
(864) 225-2250 Ext. 2300

Mrs. Deborah Maybin
132-B Point Lookout Road
Townville, SC 29689
(864) 296-3016 Ext. 310

SAMPLE CHRONOLOGICAL RESUME

JONATHON M. SMITH
109 Cherri Lane
Liberty, SC 29657
(864) 878-2898

Objective: To work as an electronics or maintenance technician utilizing my skills in troubleshooting and repairing

Education:

Associate's Degree in Industrial Technology
Tri-County Technical College, Pendleton, SC
Major: Industrial Electronics Graduation date: May 1995
Courses of study:

- Motor Controls
- Digital Electronics
- AC/DC Analysis & Circuits
- Troubleshooting

Experience:

Keowee Landscaping, Pickens, SC
Laborer, Summer, 1995

- Worked in all phases of residential/commercial landscaping
- Performed general maintenance duties on properties
- Learned to be a team problem solver

Dixie Cleaning Contractors / AT&T, Liberty, SC
Cleaner, August 1994 to April 1995

- Maintained housekeeping in offices and on production floor
- Separated plastic and cardboard for recycling

Bi-Lo, Easley, SC
Processor / Stock Clerk, July 1992 to November 1993

- Unloaded & loaded trucks
- Separated pallets and kept shelves stocked
- Interacted with customers
- Developed disciplined work habits

Activities: Volunteering with Liberty Rescue Squad
Hiking and Camping
Fishing

References:

Don Harcombe	Virgil Smith	Joey Bagworth
Welder--BASF	Maintenance Tech.	BG Landscaping
Roper Bridge Rd.	112 Park Rd.	302 Hempton Rd
Walhalla, SC 29657	Liberty, SC 29689	Liberty, SC 29657

SAMPLE FUNCTIONAL RESUME

DANIEL E. DEANGELIS
2707 Lane Avenue
Anderson, SC 29621
(864) 226-8147

OBJECTIVE

Challenging entry-level position within a progressive organization

HIGHLIGHTS OF QUALIFICATIONS

- Knowledge of retail atmosphere
- Knowledge of all shipping/receiving functions
- Customer service oriented

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

Technical Skills

- Built and refurbished floor displays
- Prepared drawings using CADD 12 and 13
- Completed training in computer processing, drafting, and management
- Completed management training with retail chain

Organization/Administration

- Recorded proper reports of sales and other transactions
- Monitored daily cash flow
- Provided customer service in retail environment
- Managed retail sales operations
- Set up and redesigned endcaps and aisle settings
- Supervised employee operations

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

1992-96	Manager Trainee	Southern Finance	Anderson, SC
1994-95	Shipping/Receiving	Alemite Corp.	Charlotte, NC
1993-94	Driver	Restaurant Express	Anderson, SC
1992-93	Repair Technician	Ryobi America	Anderson, SC
1990-92	Department Head	Toys-R-Us	Anderson, SC
1989-90	Stocker	Cosco, Inc.	Anchorage, AK
1988-89	Courier	Keys Printing Co.	Greenville, SC

EDUCATION

Tri-County Technical College, Pendleton, SC
Completed courses in: Business Management and Computer Technology
Anchorage Technical College, Anchorage, AK
Completed courses in: Computer Aided Drafting and Design
Greenville Technical College, Greenville, SC
Completed courses in: Engineering Graphics and Computer Processing

REFERENCES

Available upon request

(As you can see from the sample, functional resumes emphasize skills and qualifications more than work history and experience.)

COMPLETING A JOB APPLICATION FORM

When completing a job application form, it's important to know all the details about your work record.

- Be able to give a continuous record of any jobs you've had, including part-time and volunteer work.
- Know the names of previous employers.
- Know the exact dates of employment.
- Know the exact nature of the work you did.
- Know the names of persons able to give information about your performance.
- Know the reasons for giving up or losing your previous job.
- Know which elements in your past jobs you liked best and why.
- Look for any reasonable relationship between your past training or experience and potential jobs; do not dismiss similarities just because they are not a perfect fit.

In addition, it's also important to know your educational record. Job application forms usually require you to include more detailed information about your education than you provide in a resume.

- Know the schools you attended and dates of attendance.
- Be able to answer questions regarding your favorite subjects and why you liked them best.
- Know in which subjects you earned the best grades.
- Consider all the school and/or extracurricular activities in which you participated.

It's a good idea to compile all the information you need and keep it in a small notebook or folder. As you gain additional experience and education, update your information as needed.

WHAT EMPLOYERS LOOK FOR IN APPLICATIONS

All employers want to review applications that are neat, clear, and complete. If a question does not apply to you, do not leave the space blank. Instead, write "n/a" which means "not applicable."

CHAPTER 3

INTERVIEWING

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CHAPTER 3

INTERVIEWING

INTRODUCTION

One of the most challenging aspects of job seeking is interviewing. In this section, we'll discuss three important phases of interviewing.

- Preparing for the interview
- Interviewing effectively
- Following up after the interview

PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

Before meeting with an employer, it's essential that you prepare.

- Learn as much as you can about the company, including its history, organization, and mission. Friends, neighbors, and relatives are good sources. Check also with college placement offices, libraries, and local chambers of commerce.
- Learn everything you can about the job and how your previous experience and training qualify you for the job.
- Gather all the information you'll need to complete an application (your work history, names and addresses of references, etc.).

INTERVIEWING EFFECTIVELY

A job interview is always a challenge, but it can be a fun challenge if you've spent enough time preparing. Below are some tips for handling the interview.

- Dress appropriately for the interview. As a general rule, dress "one step up" from what you'd typically wear on the job for which you're interviewing.
- Always go to the interview alone. Arrange for baby sitters, transportation, and other pitfalls ahead of time.
- Be on time, but not too early. If you get a chance, stop by a restroom to check your appearance in a mirror.
- Establish eye contact and greet everyone you meet with a smile.
- Be attentive and sincere. The interviewer is interested in finding out as much about you as possible.
- Let the interviewer direct the conversation.
- Make sure you are honest and straightforward. It is standard practice for an interviewer to verify information you provide.
- Find common ground with the interviewer. Pictures, books, plants, etc., in the interviewer's office can be conversation items that make you both more comfortable.
- Express your interest in the job and company using information you gathered to prepare for the interview.
- Answer questions clearly and in a positive manner. Show how your skills and experience will make you productive.

WHAT NOT TO SAY DURING AN INTERVIEW

Just as you must be careful about the information you include in your resume, you also must watch what you say during an interview.

- Don't speak negatively of former employers and co-workers.
- Don't bring up salary and benefits. Let the employer do this at the appropriate time.
- Don't name a specific salary. Instead, use a salary range which will keep you from being too high or too low in negotiating.
- Don't press the interviewer for an immediate commitment.
- Don't accept an offer until you're completely satisfied.

NEGATIVE FACTORS THAT MAY LEAD TO REJECTION

An old saying goes, "forewarned is forearmed!" As you look over the list below, identify any negative factors that apply to you. Then start working on improving them!

- poor attitude
- lack of interest, knowledge, and ability
- poor grooming habits and personal appearance
- inability to express self clearly (poor voice, grammar, etc.)
- lack of planning for career, no purpose, or goals
- lack of enthusiasm
- failure to participate in activities
- over-emphasis on money
- poor scholastic record and attendance
- unwillingness to start at a lower level and work up
- lack of tact and maturity
- lack of courtesy and social understanding
- poor eye contact
- limp handshake
- sloppy, incomplete cover letter, resume, and application
- only seeking employment for a short period of time
- lack of knowledge in field of specialization
- no interest in company or product
- no previous work experience
- low moral standard and/or laziness
- objection to travel and/or relocating
- lack of participation in community activities
- unwillingness to accept responsibilities
- lack of punctuality
- lack of preparation for interview
- failure to respond effectively to questions
- lack of transportation to and from job

COMMON SHORTCOMINGS OF JOB APPLICANTS

A recent poll by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce showed that the most common shortcomings of job applicants were considered to be poor attitude and work habits (43%), inability to communicate well orally or in writing (19%), lack of specific technical skills (17%), and lack of basic reading skills (16%).

QUESTIONS OFTEN ASKED DURING AN INTERVIEW

Many interviewers ask similar questions. The more you interview, the better you get at answering questions such as these.

- What led you to choose your particular field (or academic major)? What do you like about it? What don't you like?
- In what kinds of positions are you most interested?
- Have you had summer or previous employment in this or a related field?
- What have you learned from previous work experience?
- What are the most important considerations for you in choosing a job?
- What kinds of courses have you taken that you think prepared you for this occupation?
- How did you do in courses related to this job? How did you do overall in high school? College?
- Why did you interview with our company?
- Are you willing to relocate if necessary?
- What do you see yourself doing five years from now? Ten years from now? What are your long-range goals?
- How do you spend your leisure time? Do you have hobbies?
- What would you say is your greatest strength?
- What is your greatest weakness?
- Have you ever had problems interacting with co-workers?
- What are your ideas on salary? How much money do you want to be earning ten years from now? (Remember, use a range!)
- What do you think you can contribute to our company?
- Were you ever fired from a job? Did you ever quit? Why?
- Do you have any questions?

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE INTERVIEWER

The questions you need to ask an interviewer will depend on what information *you* feel you need. Try to think of questions that cause the interviewer to visualize you in the job and demonstrate your energetic work habits. For example, "If I'm hired for this position, what kind of projects would you like for me to complete during the first six weeks?"

Another approach you can take is to ask questions that show your

long-term interest in the company. For example, "What kinds of advancement opportunities could an effective worker anticipate in three to five years?" Or, you may ask, "What changes do you foresee your company making within the next ten years?"

Regardless of the questions you choose to ask, follow the guidelines below.

- Ask questions that show your interest in contributing to the company (instead of the company contributing to you).
- Plan your questions ahead of time so that you won't be caught off guard (remember, preparation is the key).
- Ask the questions, but don't take up too much of the interviewer's time. Three to five questions is usually okay.

CLOSING THE INTERVIEW

The interviewer will definitely remember your introduction and your exit. It's very important that you leave with a smile and that the employer knows you're highly interested in the job.

- Ask when you can expect to hear from the employer. You may also ask when it would be appropriate for you to follow up.
- Write down when, where, and at what time you are to return for another interview (if applicable).
- Show the interviewer that you are *interested* in the job, that you *can* do the job, and that you are *willing* to do the job.
- Thank the interviewer and reaffirm your interest in the job.

FOLLOWING UP AFTER THE INTERVIEW

In general, an employer will interview more than one qualified candidate for a position. The employer wants to find one applicant who will emerge as the front-runner. Now is the time to separate yourself from the pack by writing a follow-up thank you letter to your interviewer(s).

A follow-up letter is designed to demonstrate your energy, thoughtfulness, professionalism, and interest. The letter should be short and simple. If possible, type or print it on the same kind of high quality paper that you used for your cover letter and resume. Send the letter as soon as possible. Try to mail it within 24 hours of the interview, or you may choose to hand deliver it if you prefer.

SAMPLE FOLLOW-UP LETTER

915 Mountain Road
Anderson, SC 29624
(864) 123-4567

March 15, 1996

Mr. Fred Smith
Director of Human Resources
Doe Company
103 Hills Avenue
Pendleton, SC 29670

Dear Mr. Smith:

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me this afternoon. I appreciate your considering me for the administrative specialist position.

After thinking further about our discussion, I'm very interested in the position. I believe my skills, experience, and interests directly match your requirements, and I believe I could make a contribution quickly.

If I can provide any additional information, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Front-runner Fred

OTHER FOLLOW-UP METHODS

If for any reason it is impossible to write and send a follow-up thank you letter, there are some other options. For example, you could call the interviewer and express your appreciation for the interview and interest in the position. For certain types of jobs, a handwritten thank you note or card may be acceptable. In general, though, a professional letter is the most effective means of follow-up.

INTERVIEWER'S CHECKLIST

Many interviewers use a checklist approach to evaluate an applicant. Also, interviewers tend to focus more on the negative than the positive. They often look for things that would weed out undesirable candidates so that a front-runner will emerge.

The checklist may be written down, or it may be a part of the interviewer's thought process. In either case, there are positive factors and negative factors such as those listed below.

Negative factors

- Applicant verbally overwhelmed the interviewer so that the interview could not be conducted properly.
- Applicant said he/she would not relocate.
- Applicant seemed confused and made contradictory statements during the interview.
- Applicant over-emphasized money and/or fringe benefits.
- Applicant gave such comments as "yeah" instead of "yes."
- Applicant lacked common courtesy.
- Applicant responded too briefly to fully answer questions.
- Applicant's voice quivered during the interview.
- Applicant's fingernails were noticeably dirty.
- Applicant's hair was not neatly groomed.
- Applicant clutched some object and fidgeted with it
- Applicant used cliches to excess.
- Applicant's choice of clothes (style, color, etc.) was out of place for the interview.
- Applicant was critical of past employer, instructors, etc.

Positive factors

- Applicant indicated that he/she had researched the organization by asking about company programs and/or policies specific to the organization.
- Applicant stuck to the subject and did not wander off on tangents.
- Applicant indicated an interest in the field of work in which the company is involved.
- Applicant used hand gestures to supplement responses.
- Applicant asked relevant questions that showed interest.

SAMPLE EMPLOYER RATING SCALE

Rating Scale

10-Exceptional-Unusually outstanding
9-Excellent-No weak spots
8-Very Good-Only minor weakness
7-Good-Some noticeable weakness
6-Fair-Lacking some basic ability
5-Average-Neither good nor poor
4-Below Average-Shows major weakness
3-Below Average-Several weaknesses
2-Poor-Lacking a great deal
1-Very Poor-Particularly unacceptable

Applicant _____

Date _____

Interviewer _____

Academic Standing:
Overall
Major
Class Rank

	Rate	Comments
APPEARANCE General impression		
CONVERSATION Ability to express self effectively		
DEMEANOR Manners, voice, gaze, bearing		
MENTAL ALERTNESS Reaction time in grasping point		
POISE AND MATURITY Stability		
AGGRESSIVENESS Frequency of asserting self		
JUDGMENT Appropriate comments		
ENTHUSIASM Interest in obtaining job		
VOICE Sound and pitch		
EXPERIENCE Work history, type of company		
POTENTIAL Apparent ability to get ahead		
EDUCATION Type, amount, etc.		
OVERALL		

CHAPTER 4

GOING TO WORK

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CHAPTER 4

GOING TO WORK

INTRODUCTION

Your job search is not complete until you're hired. In this section, we'll discuss some things to consider as you prepare to go to work.

- Testing
- Handling rejection
- Negotiating a job offer
- Going to work

TESTING

For some jobs, you may need to take a test(s). There are several types of selection and job fitness tests.

- *Aptitude tests* predict your ability to learn and perform job tasks.
- *Practical tests* measure what you know and what you can do in a job (e.g., word processing speed for a clerical job, knowledge of street names and routes for a fire fighter job, etc.).
- *Literacy tests* measure reading and arithmetic levels.

- *Personality tests* evaluate mental and emotional makeup (for jobs such as law enforcement, nursing, etc.).
- *Honesty and Integrity tests* evaluate the likelihood of stealing and trustworthiness of applicants.
- *Physical ability tests* measure strength, flexibility, stamina and speed for jobs that require physical performance.
- *Medical tests* determine physical fitness to do a job.
- *Drug tests* show the presence of illegal drugs that could impair job performance and threaten the safety of others.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR TESTS

You can't study directly for aptitude tests. But you can get ready to do your best by taking *other* tests. Look for tests or quizzes in magazines and textbooks. Set time limits. By taking tests, you learn about the testing process. This helps you feel more comfortable when you are tested.

Brush up on job skills, also. For example, if you're taking a word processing (typing) test, practice typing. If you're taking a construction test, review books and blueprints.

Get ready for physical tests by doing activities similar to those required for the job.

For literacy tests, review and do exercises in reading and math books or enroll in developmental classes.

It's natural to be nervous about tests. Some anxiety may even help you.

TIPS FOR TAKING MOST TESTS

- Make a list of what you need for the test (pencil, eye glasses, I.D., etc.). Check it before leaving.
- Get a good night's sleep.
- If you're sick, call and reschedule the test.
- Leave early for the test site.
- Tell the test administrator if you have physical difficulties.
- Ask for help before the test begins (if you don't understand the test instructions).
- Work as fast as you can. Don't linger over difficult questions.
- Find out if guessing is penalized. If it's not, guess on questions you're not sure about.

- Ask about re-testing options. You may be able to retake it.
- Get help in interpreting your scores. See if the administrators can recommend jobs your scores indicate would be best for you.

HANDLING REJECTION

Rejection is a natural part of the job-seeking process. If you are an effective job seeker, you'll receive *more* rejections than offers. That's okay. The more job leads you pursue, the more rejections you'll get. But eventually, you'll find a job--then the rejections won't matter!

TWO KINDS OF REJECTION

The most common form of rejection is ***from the employer***. This occurs when the employer feels that you are not the most qualified candidate. In today's job market, employers usually hire individuals who exceed the minimum requirements. If you receive a rejection from an employer, then most likely the employer hired someone with more experience or other qualifications.

When handling rejection from an employer, it's important that you remain level-headed. *Don't burn any bridges!* The employer who rejects you today, may hire you later. Try to understand why the employer didn't hire you, and then work on improving yourself.

If you're still interested in the position, express your continued interest to the employer. Then ask the employer to identify your weaknesses as related to the position. Explain to the employer that you plan to work hard to improve those areas. If the employer gives you feedback, listen carefully and be sure to thank him/her.

The second kind of rejection is ***from you***. This occurs when you decide that a job or company isn't right for you. Keep in mind that you have some very valuable skills that are needed in the workplace. You are under no obligation to accept a job for which you've applied unless you're comfortable with the job and the employer. Listed below are some reasons you may have for rejecting an employer.

- You don't feel capable of performing well on the job.
- You don't believe the company is committed to excellence.
- You realize that the commute would be too far.
- You aren't satisfied with the salary.
- You realize the company doesn't share your values.

NEGOTIATING A JOB OFFER

Throughout your job search, you'll probably feel as if you're always fighting to be seen, heard, and interviewed. However, there is a brief period when *you* have the ball in your court--when you get a job offer.

If you're persistent, and if you've handled rejection without letting it dampen your positive attitude, you'll eventually get a job offer. When you do, you can be sure that the employer has carefully considered your work experience, your education, your job skills, your personality, and your capabilities. At this point, the table is turned. Suddenly, you're ready to close the deal on the long process of selling yourself. The employer has offered. Now it's up to you to accept or reject the offer.

Depending on how much business savvy you have and how much of a risk-taker you are, you can influence the conditions under which you agree to go to work. The main consideration here is salary. Let's say that an employer offers you a job with a starting salary of $16,000 per year. If you accept the employer's offer, all of your future raises will be based on your starting salary.

There are times when an employer is prepared to offer more than the beginning salary. For example, if you were interested in buying a car, you'd probably not offer your highest bid first. Instead, you'd submit the first offer and see if the seller agreed to it. Similarly, you may be able to start at a higher salary if you do the following:

- Tell the employer that you're very interested in the position and thank him/her for the offer.
- Review once again the highlights of your skills and experience, explaining that you do feel you have a lot to offer.
- Respond with a salary range that is a little higher than the employer's offer. For example, if the employer offers $16,000, respond that you were hoping for a salary range between $16,500 and $18,000.
- Carefully analyze the employer's comments and make sure you don't push too hard.
- Remember that the employer may not have the flexibility or the authority to increase the offer.

If you do choose to negotiate a higher beginning salary, do it with caution and tact. Also, consider how long it took you to get the first job offer. If you've received only one offer in a year, then take it!

GOING TO WORK

Effective job seekers know that performance on the job is very important. It's essential that you do the following:

- Make a good first impression.
- Live up to the expectations an employer has for you.
- Follow through on projects you agreed to complete.
- Arrive at work on time and appropriately dressed
- Diligently try to get along with all co-workers
- Honor the company's chain of command.
- Do more than you're asked to do.

Many companies have probationary periods for new employees. These periods may be for one, three, six, or twelve months. During this time, an employer can fire someone for any or no reason. Make sure you understand the company's policy before accepting an offer.

YOUR PERFORMANCE WILL AFFECT YOUR FUTURE

In today's job market, people change jobs, employers, and careers more often than at any time in the past. Rapid advances in technology are making some jobs obsolete at a growing rate. When you land a job--even if you're very satisfied with it--it's important to begin thinking about your future job search. If you make the most of your work, you'll probably be able to advance into more satisfying and higher paying jobs. We encourage you to do the following to stay competitive.

- Keep your job skills up to date.
- Take advantage of training and education opportunities.
- Find out if your company offers tuition reimbursement.
- Keep your resume updated.
- Gain as much computer-related training as possible
- Read about changes in job trends and emerging occupations.

JUST DO IT!

Don't put off what you can do today. Tomorrow is already here!

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Books

101 Great Answers to the Toughest Interview Questions, 2nd ed., Ron Fry, Hawthorne, New Jersey: Career Press, 1994

Finding a Job After 50, Terry and Karen K. Harty, Hawthorne, New Jersey: Career Press, 1994

Focus on Your Future, T. Norden and N. Wysong, eds, Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin, 1993

How to Find and Apply for a Job, 6th ed., John Kushner, Cincinnati, Ohio: South-Western Educational Publishing, 1996

Job Strategies for People with Disabilities, Melanie A. Witt, Princeton, New Jersey: Peterson's Guides, 1992

Knock' Em Dead: With Great Answers to Tough Interview Questions, Martin J. Yate, Boston: B. Adams, 1985

Preparing for Your Career, K. J. Roberts, et al, Chatsworth, California: Opportunities for Learning, Inc., 1984

What Color Is Your Parachute? A Practical Manual for Job Hunters and Career Changers, Richard N. Bolles, Berkeley, California: Ten Speed Press, 1991

Your First Interview, 2nd ed., Ron Fry, Hawthorne, New Jersey: Career Press, 1993

On-line Information

http://www.studentcenter.com

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